

# An IT company in Madeira bucking the trends

While the economy is shrinking worldwide, some companies seem not to feel the crisis. In Madeira, where the absence of tourism due to Covid-19 led to thousands of lay-offs, one IT producer is bucking the trend.



“Every day we show that we are real people who keep in touch,” says Thomas Berndorfer from Connecting Software.

Connecting Software continues to flourish on the island, hiring talent from overseas, developing new products, and demonstrating their biggest revenue in the last 5 years. Interestingly, the company is not making anything that has boomed because of the pandemic - no telemedicine, gaming or video

conference software. They work in a rather niche B2B area - integration and synchronisation software for business needs. So where is the catch? According to Connecting Software’s CEO Thomas Berndorfer, the company was prepared for the crisis. Connecting Software, with the headquarters in Vienna, opened its Madeira office back in 2017.

Looking for a warm place with an attractive tax system, Austrian couple Thomas and Maria Berndorfer fell in love with Madeira after a holiday and decided to launch another development hub there. Now, even though the company has two more offices in Slovakia and the USA, CEO Thomas Berndorfer spends with the Madeira team at least half of each year calling the island his new home. And the team is growing. Starting with a small group of talented graduates of the University of Madeira, it has been expanding to employ other professionals from the island and overseas - Britain, Ukraine, Austria, Poland. One of the recent victories - inviting to Madeira a highly valued expert in Microsoft products to occupy the position of the Chief Technical Officer from Australia. And more positions are open: Solutions Architect, Partner Account Manager, Tester, Customer Success Manager, Web Designer, the complete list is available. Berndorfer said: “This island with its beautiful nature, kind people and delicious cuisine brings back

joy - and still enables you to work on world-class software and connect with top clients all over the world”. Among their customer portfolio - the Department of Justice Canada, public services in New Zealand, Ireland, health sector, food producers, automotive, aerospace, and industrial companies in North America, Europe and other regions. Naturally, the company felt the pandemic start like everyone else when the revenue dropped in early March. But then April and May showed a rise and the trend continues. So, what made the Madeiran IT producer crisis-resistant? Firstly, in the CEO’s opinion, the sales model. “Our software is quite complicated. For a long time, even the best salespeople couldn’t get it, and the sales never took off. But in 2012 I visited Silicon Valley and changed our marketing model. Originally complex multipurpose software - like a Swiss army knife - was broken down into small products - pain killers that tackled specific customer’s issues. Now, we started solving googleable problems”, says Thomas

Berndorfer. And because the products are very stable, self-deployed and self-maintained - minimum involvement from the team is needed. This scheme let the company continue working through the pandemic without any interruption. Also, after many failures with various sales experts, the company hired Business Development Director from Portugal, which has already given good results. “The Portuguese are historically famous for their voyages, exploration and trading. They are known to cooperate across countries and cultures”, comments the company’s CEO. In his opinion, this innate ability is a discriminator when connecting with potential customers online - because every country needs a specific approach, and the Portuguese are good at it. “Every day we show that we are real people who keep in touch. We also redesigned our website and presentations and now use photos of our team instead of stock footage - because we are proud of who we are”, says Thomas Berndorfer.

## National tourists could “narrow” hotel losses

Hoteliers in the Algarve believe that the national market can offset losses in the last three months, a period in which tourist revenues were reduced to zero, said the president of the largest sector association in the region.

Speaking to the Lusa agency, the president of the Association of Hotels and Tourist Enterprises of the Algarve (AHETA), Elidérico Viegas, indicated that confidence in the domestic market “results from very favourable behaviour”, which already translates into the number of reservations. “Reservations of national tourists are

rising every day in hotels and in the Algarve developments that have reopened, which gives us some confidence to believe in some recovery this year,” he said. The official stressed that the opening of accommodation units in the Algarve, closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, is taking place “at a good pace, but in phases”, with an estimated 60 percent in

the middle of the month and the rest in the first week of July. “In the units that reopened there is growth, in the current context, hence we are confident, because domestic tourism has always been the most numerous, both in number of people and overnight stays, in the month of August”, he stressed.

According to Elidérico Viegas, the southernmost region of Portugal “will benefit from the fact that many Portuguese people decide not to take a holiday abroad and will certainly have the Algarve as their natural destination”. “Therefore, we are confident that in relation to domestic tourism there will be very favourable behaviour”, he said.